On section 6—Board to supervise carrying out contracts.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): There was an objection from the hon. member for Kootenay East (Mr. Stevens) to the word "supervise." The suggestion is now that section 6 be struck out and another section substituted, very largely to meet the point raised by the hon. gentleman. The amendment will read:

That section 6 of the bill be struck out and the following substituted therefor:

"6. It shall be the duty of the board to take such steps as shall reasonably ensure that contracts entered into pursuant to the provisions of this part are performed in accordance with their respective terms.

Mr. DUNNING: I move that amendment.

Mr. CAHAN: I suggest that "steps" is not the best term to use.

Mr. STEVENS: "Measures."

Mr. CAHAN: "Measures" is better. What it certainly means is that this board must provide a thorough inspection and supervision during the performance of these contracts, and I think the word "measures," as the hon. member for Kootenay East suggests, is a wider term.

Mr. DUNNING: I move that the word "measures" be substituted for "steps" in the amendment.

Mr. STIRLING: Does the minister propose to elaborate on that at all? Does he propose to add to section 8?

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): I have considered carefully the observations made by my hon. friend in regard to section 8. After considering the matter, I came to the conclusion that this amendment, based upon the observations of the hon. member for Kootenay East, will largely meet the views of the hon. member for Yale (Mr. Stirling) with regard to section 8. If, however, the hon. member thinks the amendment does not meet his views, I shall be glad to defer further consideration of section 8, although the opinion we arrived at was that this amendment, changing the word "supervise" in section 6, would largely meet the objections of the hon. member with regard to section 8. For that reason no amendment is at present proposed to section 8.

Mr. STIRLING: It appears to me to be most desirable that the board should make use of the technical officers of the Department of National Defence for the purpose of this very examination, and in the wording of section 6 as amended, and in section 8 as it is printed, no such connection is alluded to.

[Mr. I. A. Mackenzie.]

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): Does my hon. friend still think there should be an addition to section 8, even in view of the amendment to section 6?

Mr. STIRLING: I simply wish to ensure there shall be a clear understanding that the board shall make use of the services of the technical officers of the department for this very work of supervision. If the minister can assure me that that is the full intention of the government, perhaps the committee will consider that satisfactory.

Mr. MACKENZIE (Vancouver): That is precisely the purpose of the amendment.

Mr. CAHAN: This board is not independent of the department. It is under the Minister of National Defence and is, in reality, nothing more than an official of the department, and therefore it must be deemed essential, I think, that whatever the department has in the way of technical knowledge and assistance must continue to be utilized to serve the interests of that department and, incidentally, to meet the special requirements of the board. I would certainly oppose this bill entirely if it were intended to set up an independent board or bureau, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, or some others which I might name. We do not wish to repudiate responsible self-government in this country and to preclude ministerial responsibility. I have expressed myself very freely in that regard, and I shall not go into the question to-day. I do not think the Department of National Defence is under competent and qualified administration, and this bill is intended to improve the administration; but I trust that we do not intend to improve the administration by depriving it of all authority and resorting to an independent bureau which is not under the direct supervision of the minister of that department.

Mr. WALSH: I wanted to say a few words along lines similar to those followed by the hon. member for St. Lawrence-St. George. I have watched the progress of this bill and have given it a certain amount of study, and it seems to me that we are transferring powers to a new creation referred to in general terms as the board. To my mind we are departing seriously from democratic government and democratic institutions as we recognize them in this country; we are providing ways and means for a Minister of National Defence and for a government to take refuge behind a certain creation, and members of parliament and others will find it difficult to obtain information and attach responsibility to the people who are really responsible. I know I